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ABSTRACT

The sociocultural significance of clothing and dress in Deerfield, a rural, midwestern elementary school, is examined. The underlying assumption is that clothing and dress illustrate the symbolic level of correspondence between patterns and meanings in public school life and those existing in society to which schools are linked. The first part of the paper describes student clothing and dress in preschool through grade six classrooms. Data on student clothing and dress were collected across grade levels by observing and recording clothing worn during the midyear winter semester at Deerfield. Two forms of dress were identified: those clothing items symbolizing high status (dress which is aesthetically rather than functionally oriented, multipurpose, and sex specific) and those items symbolizing low status (clothing which is functional and utilitarian). There was an association between student grouping patterns in rooms and student dress patterns. The second part of the paper discusses the stratification functions of items of student clothing and modes of dress. Across grade levels, it was found that the "tracked" structure of the educational system also "tracks" the clothing and modes of dress symbolic of stratified social identities, statuses, and roles. The third part of the paper notes some secondary cognitive and behavioral implications of these customary items of classroom material culture. Two implications are that clothing and dress influence teacher expectations, attitudes, and behaviors, and that student status and identity have the potential to be associated with student clothing and dress. (NE)

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Clothing and Dress -- Symbols of Stratification In Schools and In Society: A Descriptive Study

Revised.

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ABSTRACT

Clothing and Dress - Symbols of Stratification
In Schools and In Society: A Descriptive Study

The sociocultural significance of clothing and dress is examined through accounting for patterns in items of student clothing and modes of dress in the rural, midwestern elementary school termed Deerfield. Student clothing and dress are described. Across grade levels, it was found that the "tracked" structure of the educational system also "tracks" the clothing and modes of dress symbolic of stratified social identities, statuses, and roles. The attributes symbolically ascribed to clothing and dress, and by extension the students wearing them, are both emically and etically discussed. The spatial clustering of particular items of clothing and modes of dress emphasize and reinforce differences in student prestige and ranking. Ethnographic studies of formal education systems neglect the role of material culture to the expression and maintenance of stratification in schools. In both the school and in society, clothing and dress "cue" the construction of differing attitudes, expectations, and behaviors of people toward each other.

Clothing and Dress -- Symbols of Stratification In Schools and In Society: A Descriptive Study[1]

Clothing and dress are material mediums through which subtleties of social and cultural meaning are both created and expressed.[2] Clothing and dress are powerful modes for nonverbal communication (McLuhan, 1964: 114-117; Ruesch and Kees, 1956:57-75). While arbitrarily ascribed, the meanings associated with particular material items of clothing and modes of dress are quite specific (Rosencranz, 1962; Sahlins, 1976:179-204). In putting on clothing we literally put on the characteristics of which small items of cloth, texture, and color are symbolic. Clothing and dress visually permit the ready identification and categorization of socially significant groupings -- both between societies (Hostetler, 1963; Williams, 1972:174-175) as well as within societies (Fernea and Fernea, 1979; Murra, 1962). The sociocultural importance of clothing and dress lies in their legitimization and reinforcement of the habitual manners in which people identify, respond to, group, and evaluate themselves one to another.

Within stratified societies in particular, specific items of clothing and modes of dress are symbolic of stratified social identities, statuses, and roles. Stratified societies often exhibit strict rules for the wearing of particular items of clothing and modes of dress by particular categories of persons. In preconquest Peru for example, only the ruling Inca subgroup was permitted the wearing of garments woven from fine alpaca and vicuna

wool. Peasants were required to wear coarse llama wool. Among the Hindu, only the Brahmins were permitted the wearing of cotton garments. Low caste subgroups, such as the Vishyas, were required to wear wool garments. In feudal China the Mandarin upper class symbolized their freedom from manual labor through the wearing of tailored, ankle length gowns of fine silk. In 17th century England only the landed gentry wore silver and gold threaded garments, embroidered hats, ruffles, and the like. In medieval London the smoothness and sheen of fine fur, the soft fabrics and materials associated with the aristocracy, were symbols of their power and preeminence. On the other hand the bold colors and coarse fabrics such as seen in the paintings of Bruegel, symbolized the social status and role of the peasantry.

In order to maintain stratification, it is important that relative strangers at once be able to determine social identity and status. Or more precisely, that people be able to at once determine the social identity and status of the clothing and dress items shrouding each other (Goffman, 1956; Linton, 1936:113-131). Rather than the people wearing them, it is clothing and dress themselves which,symbolically,carry the weight of differential status and identity. Clothing and dress are important "cues" (Goffman, 1951) to the presence of a stratified social system.

Stratification, Clothing and Dress, and Schooling

In human culture, social structure invariably is transmitted through processes of child socialization. Schooling, in particular, is only found in stratified social systems (Cohen, 1970). As a mechanism for child socialization, schools are important arenas for studying the various manners in which stratification is replicated then perpetuated across generations. There is a functional correspondence between the stratified structure

("tracking") of public schooling and the stratified structure of society (Bourdieu, 1973; Leacock, 1969:145-174; Rosenbaum, 1975). The primary research emphasis here though, has been on the economic (cf. Bowles and Gintis, 1976), social (cf. Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968), and political (cf. Ogbu, 1974) realms through which stratification in the school is linked to stratification in the national society. Realms more symbolic and material have been neglected (cf. Johnson, 1980).

The purpose of this paper is to (1) narratively describe student clothing and dress within the classrooms of the elementary school I term Deerfield. With a (1974) population of 2,659, Deerfield is a rural village in the upper midwest; (2) to discuss the stratification functions of items of student clothing and modes of dress; and (3) to conclude by noting some secondary cognitive and behavioral implications of these customary items of classroom material culture. "Decoding" (Nash, 1977) the symbolic status and identity aspects of student clothing and dress, as well as the stratification significance of their patterning, reveals how they function in the classroom much as they do in the wider society. Clothing and dress illustrate a more subtle material and symbolic level of correspondence between patterns and meanings in public school life and patterns and meanings existing in the national society to which schools are linked.

Student Clothing and Dress at Deerfield: A Descriptive Account

As part of a more inclusive microethnographic study of the educational system, data on student clothing and dress were collected through the cross-sectional (cross grade level) observation of Deerfield's classrooms. The observation protocol was composed of relevant categories taken from Notes and Queries on Anthropology (1951:223-236) and ethnographic outlines compiled

by Jules Henry (1960) and George Peter Murdock (1961:28-31). Clothing and dress items were recorded during the midyear winter semester. To the extent possible, one must make an effort to conceptually separate students from their dress. In comic strip fashion, it is useful to imagine a pile of animated clothing devoid of the people wearing them. Rather than the students themselves, the concern here is with the significance of their clothing and dress.

Preschool:

In preschool, students are four and five years of age. Student clothing and dress are conspicuously standardized and undifferentiated. Both male and female, virtually every student consistently wears a one-piece pant/shirt garment termed a "jumper." "Jumpers" are form-fitting but not tailored. Primarily of corduroy fabric in both long and short sleeved styles, the garments come in bold, primary colors.[3] When short sleeved, cotton "T" shirts are worn underneath. Variations in "jumper" styles and colors are random and form no patterns to the contrary. Several students wear denim garments with straps hooking over the shoulders. Both males and females customarily wear black patent leather or brown lace shoes with white ankle stockings. There are isolated instances of sex-specific clothing. An occasional female, for example, wears a print cotton dress and a colored body stocking instead of white ankle stockings. Male variations from the customary "jumper" dress were not witnessed. Students wear new appearing clothing. That is, no instances of soiled, frayed, worn, or ill-fitting clothing are observed. At the beginning of the day, clothing appears freshly laundered and pressed. Shirts are sharply creased. Students exhibit day-to-day changes in separate items of clothing but no discernable change in the types of clothing worn.

Outwear predominately consists of one-piece nylon "ski" or "snow" suits. Every student exhibits environmentally appropriate dress accessories such as hats, gloves, snow boots, and scarves. Preschool clothing and dress reflect little concern with fashion or style. Clothing and dress stress the functional and the utilitarian. Students do not exhibit body decoration, cosmetics, or the use of adornments such as jewelry.

Kindergarten:

During kindergarten, rather than the spatial contiguity of one room for all students, the process of schooling becomes spatially distributed over several rooms. Kindergarten students are ages five and six.

Room A:

For both males and females, the predominant mode of dress consists of various combinations and styles of denim or corduroy "jeans," long sleeved cotton sweatshirts, cotton "T" shirts, or long sleeved cotton print shirts. Shirts are generally worn outside the waist. There are few observable differences between male and female dress. Sex-specific dress consists of an intermittent female wearing a skirt and blouse combination or a male wearing a "turtleneck" shirt. Such isolated instances form no pattern to the contrary. There are no discernable instances of ill-fitting or worn clothing. While there are frequent changes of clothing, there are few changes in the types of clothing worn. Predominantly, students wear black or brown laced shoes, cotton fabric "sneakers," and white or colored ankle stockings. Outwear primarily consists of nylon "snow" suits and waistlength fur-lined, hooded parkas, black rubber snow boots, hats, gloves, and scarves. Students do not exhibit any body decoration or adornment. The predominant mode of clothing

and dress reflects little concern with fashion or style. Emphasizing the functional and utilitarian, the customary mode of dress again remains comparatively standardized.

Room B:

In room B, student clothing and modes of dress are polarized. There is no classroom-wide homogeneity in clothing and dress. Customarily, most females wear various styles of skirts and blouses. Skirts are A-line, "jumper," or suspender style, frequently pleated, and worn over cotton ruffled blouses.[3] Colors and fabrics reflect a concern with fashion, coordinated dress, and aesthetic effect. These females wear white or black patent leather shoes with white or colored ankle stockings. Variation occurs in the wearing of colored body stockings. Females wear new-appearing outwear, hooded, fur-lined, plaid fabric "car coats" predominate. These females also exhibit attention to body decoration and adornment. Hair decoration is either through elaborate curling and braiding and the use of colored ribbons, yarns, or fashion clips. A predominant group of males wear a dress standardized around various styles of combinations of long sleeved solid color dress-type shirts, long sleeved pullover shirts, and cotton or corduroy "jeans." Customary footwear consists of brown and black lace shoes with colored jackets. For these males and females, clothing and dress appear well maintained. There are daily changes in clothing as well as dicernable changes in the types of clothing worn. Students exhibit dress accessories such as hats, gloves, and boots. Yet, there is another clothing and dress pattern in this room. A second mode of dress consists of various styles and combinations of corduroy and denim "jeans," "T" shirts, long sleeved sweatshirts, and pullover shirts of various styles worn by both males and females. These students wear "sneakers" and brown or

black lace shoes with white or colored ankle stockings. In some instances, shirts and pants are clean and crisply pressed while shoes are conspicuously clean and/or shined. In many other instances, they are not. Females wearing this mode of dress exhibit no attention to body decoration or adornment.[4] They also tend to wear solid color wool coats rather then plaid fabric "car coats." Males exhibiting this mode of dress tend to wear waistlength nylon parkas. For both males and females exhibiting this mode of dress, there are less frequent changes of clothing and no discernable changes in the types of clothing worn. This mode of clothing reflects an emphasis on function and utility. There is little emphasis on aesthetic effect. Many students exhibiting this mode of dress do not possess accessories such as snow boots and gloves.

First Grade:

Room A:

At the first grade level, students are ages seven and eight. In room A, for both males and females the predominant mode of dress consists of various styles and combinations of corduroy and denim "jeans," sweaters, "T" shirts, knit pullover sweaters and shirts, and long sleeved cotton shirts. There is an observable emphasis on wool plaid or checked shirts and shirt jackets worn outside the pants. Variations include females wearing blouse and pant combinations. During observations, no females were seen wearing skirts. There are no male variations from the predominant mode of dress. Most females wear their hair naturally,or braided and held with brightly colored yarn or rubber bands. Males exhibit no hair decoration. "Sneakers," brown and black laced shoes, and high top "workboots" are the customary footwear. Several females wear black patent leather shoes and white ankle stockings. Clothing is characteristically clean but frequently ill-fitting and worn. Here, a

shirt the arms of which are too long,or there, a coat with several missing buttons. Clothing colors are often faded and limp. Outerwear consists of midcalf length, primarily solid color belted wool coats on females and various styles of waistlength wool coats and hooded nylon parkas on males. During recess it is noticed that many of the students, especially the males, do not wear hats, gloves, or boots. From day to day, there are frequent changes in particular items of clothing but infrequent changes in clothing styles or combinations. Students do not appear to possess a large quantity of separate clothing items or different types of clothing.

Room B:

In room B, clothing and dress are polarized. The condition and style of clothing, attention to body decoration and adornment, and presence of dress accessories vary considerably. Both male and female, roughly half the students exhibit a predominant mode of dress characterized by various styles and combinations of denim and corduroy "jeans," long sleeved shirts, long sleeved pullover shirts, plaid shirt jackets, striped polo and "T" shirts, and sweatshirts. For these students, outerwear primarily consists of heavy wool overcoats frequently exhibiting frayed fabric, missing buttons, and a worn appearance. Customary footwear consists of "sneakers," "workboots," or brown and black laced shoes. Further, there is an observable lack of dress accessories such as hats, gloves, and scarfs. On the other hand, another group of students can be distinguished by their clothing and mode of dress. Here, the most noticeable characteristic is the presence of skirt and blouse combinations on the females. These females wear white or colored ankle stockings with black patent leather or lace shoes. Their overcoats are knee length, hooded, fur-line "car coats" or solid color wool coats. Invariably,

they possess hats, gloves, boots, and scarves. Those female students exhibiting newer appearing and more stylish outerwear also reflect a concern with hair styling and decoration. The predominant pattern here is intricate hair curling or braiding into "pig tails" (two plaited strands of hair hanging from the back of the head). Hair is frequently decorated with brightly colored yarn or marble sized plastic clips. A group of males also wear "jeans" and shirt combinations but are distinguished by the new appearance and freshly pressed look of their clothing. None of the males exhibit hair or body decoration. From day to day, there are less frequent changes in items of clothing among the males and among the females. Beginning at this grade level, it is consistently observed that females periodically wear stereotypic "male" dress yet not males are seen wearing stereotypic "female" dress and clothing combinations. Consistently, females seem to posses a greater quantity of separate clothing items as well as a greater quantity of different types of clothing.

Second Grade:

Room A:

In the second grade, students are ages eight and nine. In room A, for both males and females the predominant mode of student clothing and dress consists of various styles and combinations of corduroy and denim "jeans," sweaters and long sleeve knit shirts, "T" shirts, sweatshirts, and long sleeved shirts. When decorated, females wear their hair braided and held with rubber bands. Males do not exhibit hair decoration. Footwear consists of brown and black laced shoes or "sneakers" with white or colored ankle stockings. The predominant characteristic of the clothing (especially for

the males) is that it is frequently worn, frayed, soiled and spotted, or ill-fitting. Student dress exhibits a limited range of variation. Most students do not exhibit frequent changes of clothing or frequent changes in the type of clothing worn. Isolated instances to the contrary form no discernable pattern. There is a conspicuous absence of accessories such as hats, gloves, boots, and scarves. In no discernable style, outerwear consists of midlength jackets on males and longer knee length coats on females.

Room B:

The predominate mode of student clothing and dress is sexually differentiated. There are conspicuous instances of sex-specific clothing. Virtually every female consistently wears various styles and combinations of skirts and blouses. A group of females consistently wear various styles of dresses. In addition to customary white ankle stockings, many females wear elaborately colored knee length stockings with patent leather shoes. Predominantly, outerwear consists of "car coats." These females customarily wear their hair pulled back, parted in the middle, and tied with colored clips or thick, brightly colored strands of yarn. Several females consistently carry small hand purses. Several females wear small (pierced) earrings and fingernail polish. Male clothing is comparatively undifferentiated. The customary mode of dress is various styles and combinations of corduroy or cotton pants or sharply creased denim "jeans" and long sleeved knit pullover shirts, and sweaters. No sweatshirts or "T" shirts observed. Clothing is clean, pressed, and fitting. An interesting variation here is the emphasis placed on belts. Without exception, all the males wear their shirts in their pants. They wear wide black and brown leather belts with large gold and silver plated buckles. Footwear consists of new appearing "sneakers" and

the customary lace shoes. Outerwear consists of waistlength coats, athletic-style jackets, and various styles of nylon covered jackets. On both males and females there is the characteristic presence of dress accessories such as zippered sweaters, scarves, boots, hats, and gloves. Both male and female clothing is new appearing. That is, colors and textures are sharp, fabrics are crisp, the clothing is not worn but is clean and pressed. For both males and females, clothing and dress exhibit attention to fashion and style. Colors, fabrics, and textures are consciously coordinated.

Third Grade:

Room A:

In third grade, students are ages nine and ten. In room A, for both males and females the predominant mode of dress is composed of various styles and combinations of denim and corduroy "jeans", hooded sweatshirts, "T" shirts, long sleeved cotton shirts, shirt jackets, and pullover sweaters. Several females occasionally wear shirt and blouse combinations. Otherwise, there is no variation on this predominant mode of dress. Customary footwear includes "sneakers," in various stages of wear, and laced shoes. Females characteristically wear their hair unadorned. Isolated instances to the contrary consist of braided hair tied with rubber bands or brightly colored strands of yarn. Outerwear consists of various styles of nylon, corduroy, and wool waistlength and knee length coats. There is a conspicuous absence of dress accessories such as gloves, boots, and hats. The predominant visual impression is of clothing that is frequently worn, ill-fitting, and older appearing. Isolated instances to the contrary do not form a distinctive pattern.

Room B:

In room B, students exhibit a predominant mode of dress characterized by sex-specific clothing. The predominant male dress is various styles and combinations of "jeans", long sleeved "dress" shirts, cotton or corduroy pants, and laced shoes. There is considerable female emphasis on hair decoration, curling, and the use of decorative ribbons, beads, and clips. Is is customary for females to wear various blouse/skirt combinations. During observation, ruffled blouses and plaid "jumper" style skirts are predominant. Most females wear knee length solid color or varicolored stockings with patent leather shoes. Several females characteristically wear ear and finger rings; ~~a few ear bracelets.~~ The predominant male outerwear is various styles and colors of waistlength coats. Predominant female outerware is hooded knee length belted coats. The dress is coordinated, aesthetic, and styled.

Fourth Grade:

Room A:

In the fourth grade, students are ages ten and eleven. In room A, males and females exhibit a predominant mode of dress characterized by various styles and combinations of "jeans," sweaters, sweatshirts, "T" shirts, and long sleeved collared shirts. Variation forms a minor pattern centered on the elaboration of male footwear. Here, there is conspicuous emphasis on males wearing elaborate "cowboy" boots, "sneakers," heavy laced shoes, or laced "work" boots. Male outerwear emphasizes waistlength WWII flight-style jackets, heavy plaid shirt jackets, and nylon parkas. Females wear their hair naturally. There is little emphasis on decoration and adornment.

Females primarily wear sweatshirts and turtleneck shirts. Female outerwear consists of both waistlength and knee length coats. There is a conspicuous absence of dress accessories such as hats, gloves, boots, and scarves.

Room B:

In room B, the predominant mode of dress is characteristically sex-specific. Every female consistently wears various combinations of skirts and blouses, primarily with ankle length stockings and dresses or pants worn with decorative neck scarves. Fingernail polish, finger rings, bracelets, and (pierced) earrings are common. Every female exhibits some attention to hair styling and decoration. There is though, an absence of plastic clips and yarn. The predominant mode of dress for males consists of various styles and combinations of long sleeved "dress" shirts, long sleeved knit pullover and ski-style sweaters, worn with belted corduroy or cotton pants. Outerwear emphasized athletic-style and waistlength jackets on males and hooded, fur-lined nylon ski jackets or calf-lingth hooded and belted plaid coats on the females. Every student possesses dress accessories such as hats, gloves, and scarves.

Fifth and Sixth Grades:

Room A:

In the combined fifth and sixth grades, students are ages eleven through thirteen. In room A, for both males and females the predominant mode of student dress consists of various styles and combinations of "jeans" and tops. Commonly, the females' "jeans" are elaborated with decorative stiching and various sewn-on messages such as "Love" and "No Parking." Females tend to wear long sleeved shirts and "jeans" with brown loafers and stockings. Here,

females exhibit a concern with decoration via the streaking, frosting, and tipping of their hair. Most every female wears lipstick, earrings, bracelets, finger rings, or fingernail polish. Males characteristically wear denim or corduroy "jeans" with flannel or wool plaid or check shirts. Other males wear a variety of sweatshirts, polo shirts, or knit pullover shirts. Males predominantly wear thick soled "work" shoes, heavy engineer boots, or hunting boots. Outerwear primarily consists of hooded waistlength nylon jackets on females and C.P.O. style jackets, leather and heavy vinyl jackets, and olive drab hunting jackets on males. Most every student possesses dress accessories such as gloves and scarves.

Room B:

In room B female dress predominantly consists of various styles and combinations of dresses, skirts and blouses, or pants and long sleeved "dress" shirts. With their dresses, a few females consistently wear nylon hosiery. Males wear various combinations of long sleeved collared shirts, sleeveless sweater vests, pullover knit shirts, and corduroy or other fabric pants. On only one day of observation were male students seen wearing "jeans." Males wear leather belts with prominent buckles. Lace-up shoes are predominant. Females exhibit hair curling and styling. Several students, both male and female, are wearing wristwatches and finger rings. Outerwear consists of "rancher" type jackets, athletic jackets, and other styles of waistlength jackets on males and hooded, belted, nylon parkas or calf-length coats on females. Every student possesses dress accessories such as gloves and scarves. Students here exhibit frequent changes of clothing as well as frequent changes in the kinds of clothing worn. Clothing is clean and pressed. The predominant impression is of dress for an aesthetic effect.

Symbolic Attributes

Continuing the pile of animated clothing metaphor, we ask what general symbolic attributes, other than those obviously associated with sex and age, can be ascribed to these items of clothing and modes of student dress.

One of the primary attributes of clothing and dress is their symbolic association with occupational status and identity. Stratification in the occupational subsystem of our society is illustrated in the ranked, linguistic distinctions we make between "manual"/"nonmanual", "professional"/"working," and "white collar"/"blue collar" categories as well as between the particular items of clothing and modes of dress with which each occupational clustering is associated. Phraseology itself denotes the lower ranked status and identity accorded, by the national culture, to manual work. The media romanticism of "jeans" aside and adolescent clothing fads to the contrary, manual labor (and the clothing and dress symbols of manual labor) remains comparatively low statused while nonmanual labor (and the clothing and dress symbols of nonmanual labor) remains comparatively high statused (Craig, 1973:314; Douty, 1963; Molloy, 1975, 1977; Ostermeier and Eicher, 1966). Low status "manual" clothing and dress emphasize the functional and the utilitarian. "Manual" work clothing customarily is manufactured from heavy, durable fabrics such as denim, twill, and corduroy. At Deerfield, single purpose garments such as "sweatshirts," "T" shirts, heavy "work" boots and shoes, denim clothing, and "work" jackets are low statused through their symbolic association with "manual" labor and "blue collar" occupational categories (Form and Stone, 1955). On the other hand, "white collar" occupations are associated with suits, ties, slacks, and dress shirts (Form and Stone, 1955). These clothing and dress items symbolize high status through their lack of association with physical labor (Douty, 1963).

At Deerfield, high status clothing and dress items include "dress" coats, shoes, pants, "dress" shirts, and belts. For females, we add coordinated skirt and blouse combinations, hair grooming, and "dress" shoes (Molloy, 1975, 1976). High status clothing and dress are aesthetically rather than functionally orientated, multipurpose, and sex-specific (Craig, 1973:314). An initial (etic) conclusion here is that some predominant clothing and dress symbols of differential occupational status and identity, for example, are present at Deerfield elementary school.

The ranking of occupations is a prime component in the definition of a stratified society (Fried, 1967:185-226). In stratified societies, occupational categories are ascribed a rank in association with specific items of clothing and modes of dress (Horn, 1968; Roach and Eicher, 1965, 1973). Stratification in the occupational subsystem is often expressed spatially. Various Hindu subcastes in traditional India were required to live in particular residential areas. Feudal lords in their castles were spatially segregated from serfs in their homesteads. "White collar" and "blue collar" labor subgroups not only exhibit different types of work and wear different types of clothing and dress (cf. Jasinski, 1957), but their activities are often carried out in different spatial areas as well. A common industrial example would be the spatial distinction and separation made between differentially ranked "white collar" plant management (office) staff and the "manual" (assembly line) workers. Along with the people who happen to be wearing them, the clothing and dress symbols of high and low occupational status are differentiated and spatially stratified. In each case, spatial separation functions to reinforce the ranked identity and status of each category.

In similar fashion at Deerfield, we see that items of clothing and modes of dress carry both "manual" and "white collar" status and identity. But the clothing and dress are not evenly distributed. When compared across grade levels, one finds increasing dissimilarity in student clothing and dress between rooms and increasing similarity within rooms:

Insert Table 1 Here

The piles of clothing are differentially clustered. During the middle grades, variation in clothing and dress between rooms becomes more pronounced than variation within rooms. These clusterings are not absolute. There is minor overlap on almost every clothing and dress category. But by the fifth and sixth grades, within-room variation in clothing and dress is rare. The homogeneity between rooms is starkly apparent. Most of the items of student clothing and modes of dress in rooms A carry low status identities while items of clothing and dress in rooms B carry high status identities. "Tracking" is a form of social organization subdividing the student peer group ostensibly on the basis of academic ability. Students at Deerfield are differentially labeled ("high"/"low"), ranked ("high" students are accorded more prestige and deference), exhibit differential access to strategic resources (stratification) such as "grades," and are spatially separated into different rooms. The data argue that a stratified, "tracked" educational structure is also "tracking" some clothing and dress symbols of differential status and identity. As these clothing and dress items inherently are ranked, the conclusion is that the structure of the educational system stratifys some symbols of occupational status and identity. The patterning of student clothing and dress

Table I. Spatial Distribution of Student Clothing and Dress

Rooms B	Rooms A
I. Clothing:	I. Clothing:
A. Condition and Type of Clothing	A. Condition and Type of Clothing
1. Quantity and Quality	1. Quantity and Quality
Large quantity of clothing	Small quantity of clothing
Large variety of clothing	Small variety of clothing
Newer-appearing clothing	Older-appearing clothing
2. Style	2. Style
Soft fabrics; delicate, intricate, muted colors	Coarse fabrics, bold, undiluted colors
Coordinated dress	Noncoordinated dress
Currently fashionable clothing	Utilitarian clothing
Aesthetic dress	Utilitarian dress
3. Clothing care	3. Clothing care
Pressed, creased, and freshly laundered	Frequently unpressed, wrinkled, and soiled

Table I. (Cont.) Spatial Distribution of Student Clothing and Dress

Rooms A	Rooms B
B. Appropriateness	B. Appropriateness
1. As concerns age	1. As concerns age
Frequently tailored, fitted to body proportions	Frequently ill-fitting
2. As concerns sex	2. As concerns sex
Sex-specific clothing	Frequent unisex clothing
3. As concerns environment	3. As concerns environment
School appropriate	Clothing frequently not adhering to dress norms
Climate appropriate	Climate inappropriate; lack of hats, gloves
Presence of dress accessories	
II. Body Decoration and Adornment	II. Body Decoration and Adornment
A. Cosmetics (facial/body)	A. Cosmetics (facial/body)
Frequently present	Frequently absent
B. Dress accessories	B. Dress accessories
Frequent presence of adult-orientated dress accessories	Infrequent use of adult-orientated accessories
C. Hair adornment	C. Hair adornment
Decoration; styling	Undecorated; unstyled

at Deerfield replicates patterns of stratified occupational status and identity, as symbolized in clothing and dress, in the national society. Clothing and dress patterns symbolize the stratification occurring in the school system just as they symbolize the stratification occurring in the wider social system of which the school is a part. Just as symbolic distance exists between various ranked categories of clothing and dress, so too does physical distance exist between them as well. Similar to the office or the industrial plant to which schooling has been likened, the spatial separation of clothing and dress clusters further emphasizes and reinforces differential ranking and prestige.

Cognitive and Behavioral Considerations

At this point, we can put students into the piles of clothing. At Deerfield, the prevailing teacher and administration explanation for variation in student clothing and dress was by reference to either social race or socioeconomic class. Rather than their clothing and dress, the students themselves, and by extension their families, were the basis for (emic) explanation. When I pointed out the association between student grouping patterns and student clothing and dress patterns, the customary explanation was that the "poorer students" (whom they associated with "poor" clothing and dress) do not "do as well" as the "top" students (whom they associated with "nice" clothing and dress). They linked the attributes of clothing and dress ("low status"/"high status") to the children who happened to be wearing them.

Does the data presented here support this explanation? Is there an association between clothing and dress, social race, and social class?

At Deerfield, each of the classrooms observed contained both black and white students in roughly even numbers. Blacks and whites shared both

clothing and dress similarities and differences. Across grade levels, no patterning to student clothing and dress that could be accounted for by reference to social race could be detected.

There is a serious conceptual error made in accounting for similarities and differences in student clothing and dress patterns by reference to socioeconomic class. This level of interpretation fails to distinguish the ascribed, symbolic aspects of clothing and dress from the personal characteristics of the children wearing them. The assumption is that there are invariable categories of clothing and dress associated with particular socioeconomic classes. As has been indicated, this is the case for many stratified societies. But the invariant association between clothing and dress and the socioeconomic status of individuals in our contemporary society is tenuous. Except stereotypically perhaps, individuals and subgroups differing by color or socioeconomic condition are no longer structurally frozen into required modes of dress. Punishment by death for sartorial transgressions of sumptuary laws is not the case in our society. An assembly line worker with comparatively low socioeconomic status can purchase a new dress and some ballet hose for his elementary school daughter and thereby manipulate the clothing symbols associated with class status. At Deerfield and elsewhere, people continually manipulate the clothing and dress symbols of socioeconomic status and identity (Goffman, 1951; Littrell and Eicher, 1973; Molloy, 1975, 1977). Other than through the symbolic there is little significant association between particular items of clothing, modes of dress, and socioeconomic status. Items of clothing and dress themselves carry fixed status and identity. Because the statuses and identities they symbolize are so easily manipulated, clothing and dress are not accurrate predictors of a person's socioeconomic status

or social race. Rather than focusing on the manipulators, it is more important to focus on what is being manipulated.

What difference, we might conclude, does it make that elementary school children wear the clothing and dress symbolic of different occupational identities and statuses? Am I saying, for instance, that all the students in rooms A will become janitors and assembly line workers in their later years?

In "tracked" school systems, we know that different groups of students have different educational experiences and exhibit different educational outcomes (Leacock, 1969:149-174; Rosenbaum, 1975). The differential classroom experiences of students are affected by a host of factors other than the academic. As astute students and their parents at Deerfield are well aware, clothing and modes of dress stimulate (or "cue") different expectations, attitudes, and behaviors on the part of school personnel. Parents put money into school clothing and dress ("good clothes" as they are termed at Deerfield) because they know clothing and dress do make an important difference. Some parents at Deerfield are correct in recognizing that clothing and dress influence teacher and administrator perception of future status and role. It is not so much a matter of whether or not students in rooms A will become janitors and assembly line workers as it is a matter of whether or not Deerfield personnel think they will be. Sometimes conciously and sometimes unconsciously, what we do is "decode" the symbols of clothing and dress and make inferences about the people wearing them. In this matter of "decoding" clothing and dress symbols, school constituents at Deerfield are not exempt from stereotypic interpretations more common to the national society. As well as symbolizing status and identity, student clothing and dress also can be interpreted as "cues" to the personal habits, personality traits, character, presumed ability, and competence of the wearer. By ascription, student status

and identity have the potential to be associated, as many Deerfield teachers made the association, with student clothing and dress (Douty, 1963; Littrell and Eicher, 1973; Ostermier and Eicher, 1966). At Deerfield, the spatial separation of status and identity symbols reinforces the potential for "cueing" the differential attitudes implied in the labels "high track" and "low track."

At Deerfield, students wearing the clothing and dress predominant in rooms B were ascribed high status while students wearing the clothing and dress predominant in rooms A were ascribed low status. Rather than low status clothing and dress being disparaged, it was more a matter of high status clothing and dress being praised. I never heard a teacher say "My ___, that is a dirty blouse you have on!", but many times I did hear teachers say "My ___, what a pretty pair of boots! Are those new boots? Did you get them for Christmas?", Or, "____, what a pretty coat?". Or, "____, you look so nice today", Or, "____, put on your apron (plastic aprons worn while painting at easels). You don't want to get paint all over your blouse." Males were praised for wearing their shirts in their pants. One often heard the phrase "looking like little gentlemen." High status clothing, and the students wearing them, were continually praised and given more attention. Students wearing high status clothing were touched more frequently. One noticed that teachers would often touch the hair of female students who wore those elaborate colored beads. They would caress their well-groomed hair as they talked to them.

Deerfield elementary school does not have a formal dress code, but consider the latent messages conveyed in this section of the Deerfield Paraprofessional (teacher's aide) Handbook:

> In all probability, his [(not her or them)] elementary

> school teacher will have middle-class standards--neatness, obedience, cooperativeness, etc... [my italics].

and

> To be a teacher's aide, you will have to like all kinds of children, you know; you will have to like the clean and the dirty [my italics]

The pamplet on Elementary School Rules and Safety Reminders states that:

> Any student who comes to school without proper attention having been given to personal cleanliness or neatness of dress may be sent home [my italics].

In most all instances, teachers at Deerfield are well-meaning people who care about the education of children. Unconsciously at best, they conveyed the attitudes predominant in the national society. As it works out at Deerfield, an informal clothing and dress code tends to favor those students wearing the clothing in rooms B.[5]

Walking into any school classroom, clothing and dress daily confront teachers as criteria for the potential construction of differential attitudes, expectations, and behaviors toward students. As it is at variance with professed beliefs concerning equality of educational opportunity, a subtle basis for the maintenance of stratification in schools is through the differential spatial organization of some predominant symbols of stratification, along with the students wearing them.[6]

ENDNOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Houston, Texas. The data on which this paper is based were gathered during 1974-1975 under grant #MH58496-01 from the National Institutes of Mental Health. Data analysis and writing were supported by grant #1-0-203-3401-MR030 from the Spencer Foundation.

2. By clothing, I refer to the literal covering of the body. By dress, I refer to the symbolic and aesthetic ordering of clothing materials for a desired effect. Dress refers to the semantic sphere of clothing.

3. Defining adulthood is defining sexuality. At Deerfield, sex-specific clothing and dress appear at ages five and six. Up to the fifth and sixth grades, parents exert more influence on clothing and dress choices than do the students themselves. The transition from child (sexless) to nonchild (sexuality) is often symbolized by the wearing of clothing and dress that is clearly sex-differentiated (DeWitt, 1963; Wax and Wax, 1965). "Jumpers" for example, are characterized by extreme unisexuality. There are no subtle color or fabric distinctions symbolizing sexuality.

4. Note that females are permitted the wearing of customary male dress while males are not permitted the wearing of customary female dress. Female clothing and dress are less role specific than male clothing and dress. Female dress is less transferable and therefore less ambiguous. Females are permitted more aesthetic emphasis in their dress than males.

As compared with female dress, male dress is utilitarian, functional and unadorned. There is less variation in make than female dress.

5. Whether formally or informally, public schools emphasize high status identities for student clothing and dress. Craig (1973:314) notes that when dress codes are present, females are generally forbidden the wearing of low status items such as T-shirts, sweatshirts, and the like while males are forbidden the wearing of dungarees, T-shirts, and sweatshirts. Craig's discussion of high status student clothing and dress emphasizes "a coordinated, versatile, multipurpose wardrobe that is well maintained and appropriate to the school environment" (see also Wax and Wax, 1964). Ryan (1966:251) found that "normative" school dress seems to consist of variations around a standard uniform of skirt and blouse, sweaters, dresses, ankle stockings, and flat-heeled shoes. For males, "normative" school dress consists of variations around a standard uniform of pants, shirts, and oxford-type shoes. Watches, umbrellas, purses and the like are high status accessories (Molloy, 1975, 1977).

6. Uniform student dress has been a traditional means of ostensibly negating status and identity ranking based on clothing differences (Singleton, 1967:29). Yet, educational systems remain functionally congruent with social structure. In actuality, uniform student dress renders more obvious the relative status position of individual schools within ranked and stratified national educational hierarchies as well as stimulating more subtle "cueing" of status and identity symbols within individual schools. Within national educational systems, elite schools traditionally employ uniform student dress as an obvious mechanism reinforcing high

status identity and occupational socialization. At Exeter, Choate, Miss Porters, Phillips Academy, or St. Marks, high status clothing composed of the jacket, tie, or dress is the rule rather than the exception. Subtle status is garnered via Halston dresses, Cardin jackets, silk club ties, and so forth. Uniforms emphasize differential status and identity relative to other subgroups within local school systems as well as differential status and identity between other schools within the national educational system.

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